

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN JOSE DIVISION

10 JIGNESHI J. JARIWALA,) Case No.: 10-CV-04383-LHK
11 Plaintiff,)
12 v.) ORDER GRANTING DEFENDANTS'
13 JANET NAPOLITANO, Secretary for the) MOTION TO DISMISS WITHOUT
Department of Homeland Security, ET AL.,) PREJUDICE
14 Defendants.) (re: docket # 12)

17 Plaintiff Jigneshi Jariwala (“Plaintiff”) brings suit to compel the United States Citizenship
18 and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) to accept jurisdiction and adjudicate his application for
19 adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident. Defendants move to dismiss for lack of subject
20 matter jurisdiction pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1). Plaintiff has not filed an opposition.
21 Pursuant to Local Civil Rule 7-1(b), the Court concludes that this motion is appropriate for
22 determination without oral argument and vacates the April 7, 2011 motion hearing. For the reasons
23 discussed below, Defendants’ motion to dismiss is GRANTED WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

24 **I. BACKGROUND**

25 Plaintiff, a native citizen of India, applied for asylum on October 13, 1992. The application
26 was denied and an order to show cause (“OSC”) as to why he should not be deported for entering
27 the United States without inspection was issued on March 9, 1994. Compl. ¶ 11. Plaintiff also
28

1 filed a second application with the asylum office under the name of Jingesh Mehta. *Id.* at ¶ 15. An
2 OSC in connection with the Mehta file was issued on November 17, 1994. *Id.*

3 Plaintiff did not respond to either OSC. After Plaintiff failed to appear for a November 20,
4 1995 hearing on the merits of his asylum application regarding the Jariwala file, the Immigration
5 Judge (“IJ”) issued an order of deportation. *Id.* at ¶ 13. Plaintiff also failed to appear for an April
6 25, 1996 hearing regarding the Mehta file, and was likewise ordered deported *in absentia*. *Id.* at
7 ¶ 15 n.1.

8 Plaintiff filed petitions for review with the Ninth Circuit. *Id.* at ¶¶ 16-17. These petitions
9 were consolidated and remanded to the Board of Immigration Appeals (“Board”) for consideration
10 of actions necessary for clarification of Plaintiff’s identity. *Id.* In the Mehta case, the Board
11 concluded that Jingesh Mehta was the Plaintiff’s true identity, denied reopening of the proceedings,
12 and upheld the IJ’s finding of deportation. *Id.* at ¶ 18. The Board also denied Plaintiff’s motion to
13 reconsider. *Id.* In the Jariwala case, the Board terminated proceedings as moot in light of the
14 determination in the Mehta case regarding Plaintiff’s true identity. *Id.* at ¶ 20. Petitions for review
15 were again filed in both cases. The petition in the Jariwala case was voluntarily dismissed, while
16 the petition in the Mehta case was denied by the Ninth Circuit on October 8, 2010.

17 During this time, Plaintiff married his wife Angelina Jariwala in 1997. *Id.* at ¶ 2. Angelina
18 Jariwala was a permanent resident of the United States at the time of their marriage, but became a
19 U.S. citizen the following year. *Id.* Plaintiff twice filed an application for adjustment of status to
20 lawful permanent resident with the USCIS based upon his marriage to a U.S. citizen. *Id.* at ¶ 28.
21 USCIC, however, responded that it lacked jurisdiction over the adjustment application because
22 Plaintiff had been placed in deportation proceedings. *See Exh. D, attached to Compl.*

23 Plaintiff filed his complaint on September 28, 2010 requesting an order from this Court
24 mandating USCIS to accept jurisdiction and adjudicate Plaintiff’s application for adjustment of
25 status. Defendants have moved to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction.

26 II. LEGAL STANDARDS

27 Except where statutes divest courts of jurisdiction, agency action is judicially reviewable
28 under 28 U.S.C. § 1331. *Califano v. Sanders*, 430 U.S. 99, 107 (1977). Rule 12(b)(1) of the

1 Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires dismissal of a complaint if the court lacks subject matter
2 jurisdiction. On a motion to dismiss for lack of subject matter jurisdiction under Rule 12(b)(1), the
3 party asserting jurisdiction has the burden of establishing that subject matter jurisdiction is proper.
4 *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co.*, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994); *St. Clair v. City of Chico*, 880 F.2d
5 199, 201 (9th Cir.1989).

6 The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) allows a court to “compel agency action
7 unlawfully withheld or unreasonably delayed.” 5 U.S.C. § 706(1). Unless specified by statute, only
8 a final agency action is subject to judicial review. 5 U.S.C. § 704; *W. Radio Services Co. v. U.S.*
9 *Forest Serv.*, 578 F.3d 1116, 1122 (9th Cir. 2009) *cert. denied*, 130 S. Ct. 2402 (U.S. 2010).

10 III. DISCUSSION

11 Plaintiff claims that Defendants’ refusal to adjudicate his adjustment of status application is
12 arbitrary, an abuse of discretion, and not in accordance with the law. Defendants have moved to
13 dismiss Plaintiff’s complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Defendant argues that
14 Plaintiff’s failure to exhaust his available remedies deprives this Court of jurisdiction. Plaintiff did
15 not file an opposition to Defendants’ motion to dismiss.

16 A. Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies under 8 U.S.C. § 1252

17 “Where Congress specifically mandates, exhaustion is required. But where Congress has
18 not clearly required exhaustion, sound judicial discretion governs.” *See Cassirer v. Kingdom of*
19 *Spain*, 616 F.3d 1019, 1034 (9th Cir. 2010) (citing *McCarthy v. Madigan*, 503 U.S. 140, 144
20 (1992)). If an exhaustion statute explicitly limits subject matter jurisdiction, failure to exhaust
21 administrative remedies is a bar to federal subject matter jurisdiction. *See McBride Cotton &*
22 *Cattle Corp. v. Veneman*, 290 F.3d 973, 979 (9th Cir. 2002). The federal statute regarding
23 adjustment and change of an immigrant’s status states that a court may review a final order of
24 removal only if “the alien has exhausted all administrative remedies available to the alien as of
25 right.” *See* 8 U.S.C. § 1252(d)(1). Further, “[i]n the case of any alien who has been placed in
26 deportation proceedings or removal proceedings (other than as an arriving alien), the immigration
27 judge hearing the proceeding has exclusive jurisdiction to adjudicate any application for adjustment
28 of status the alien may file.” *See* 8 C.F.R. § 1245.2(a)(1)(I).

1 Here, USCIS properly determined that it lacked jurisdiction over Plaintiff's application for
2 adjustment of status because Plaintiff's deportation proceedings remain pending. The Board of
3 Immigration Appeals only terminated the Jariwala case because it found that Jingesh Mehta was
4 Plaintiff's "true identity." In the Mehta case, a valid order of removal remains, and is binding upon
5 Plaintiff. Furthermore, the adjustment of status that Plaintiff seeks is inextricably linked to the
6 removal order. Indeed, a successful adjustment of status would result in the invalidation of the IJ's
7 removal order. See *Morales-Izquierdo v. Dep't of Homeland Sec.*, 600 F.3d 1076, 1082-83 (9th
8 Cir. 2010).

9 In these circumstances, Plaintiff's request for adjustment of status should be before an IJ.
10 As Defendants suggest, Plaintiff may file a motion to reopen with the Board of Immigration
11 Appeals to renew his adjustment application for *de novo* consideration before an IJ. Defs.' Mot. to
12 Dismiss at 7. Indeed, Plaintiff states in his complaint that this is one of the avenues which he is
13 currently pursuing. Compl. ¶ 9. With this alternative form of relief available, Plaintiff has not
14 exhausted all administrative remedies available as required by 8 U.S.C. § 1252(d)(1).

15 **B. Judicial Review under the APA**

16 The APA permits judicial review of a final agency action "for which there is no other
17 adequate remedy in a court." See 5 U.S.C. § 704. "When an aggrieved party has exhausted all
18 administrative remedies expressly prescribed by statute or agency rule, the agency action is 'final
19 for the purposes of [the APA]' and therefore 'subject to judicial review.'" See *Darby v. Cisneros*,
20 509 U.S. 137, 146 (1993). Therefore, the issue here is whether at the time this action was filed
21 there had been a final agency action for which Plaintiff had no other adequate remedy. As detailed
22 above, Plaintiff does have an adequate alternative remedy. See 8 CFR 1245.2(a)(1) (providing IJ
23 with jurisdiction to adjudicate adjustment of status when alien has been placed in removal or
24 deportation proceedings).

25 Since Plaintiff may, and apparently has, filed a motion to reopen with the Board and may
26 potentially obtain *de novo* review before an IJ, the order for removal is not yet final. The Ninth
27 Circuit has recently held that a district court lacks jurisdiction under the APA when *de novo* review
28 before an IJ is available, as it is here. See *Cabaccang v. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Servs.*,

1 627 F.3d 1313, 1316 (9th Cir. 2010) (no final agency action when aliens had the right to renew
 2 their applications to adjust status before the immigration judge and would have “an opportunity to
 3 fully develop their arguments before the immigration judge”). In addition, the Ninth Circuit
 4 concluded that the pendency of removal proceedings meant that the aliens had not exhausted their
 5 administrative remedies. *Id.* at 1316-17 (“Until they have exhausted this available administrative
 6 remedy [seeking adjustment of status before an IJ], the district court cannot hear their claim.”).
 7 Therefore, the Court does not have jurisdiction under the APA.¹

8 IV. CONCLUSION

9 Accordingly, as Plaintiff has not exhausted his available remedies, Defendants’ motion to
 10 dismiss is GRANTED WITHOUT PREJUDICE. The April 7, 2011 motion hearing is vacated.
 11 The Clerk shall close the file.

12 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

13
 14 Dated: April 4, 2011



Lucy H. Koh
 15 LUCY H. KOH
 United States District Judge

25 ¹ As an alternative ground for dismissal, Defendants argue that the REAL ID Act, codified
 26 at 8 U.S.C. § 1252(a)(5) and (b)(9), divests district courts of jurisdiction over adjustment of status
 27 denials by USCIS when the alien has been placed into removal proceedings. *See* Defs.’ Mot. to
 28 Dismiss at 13. Since the Court has accepted Defendants’ first two grounds for dismissal, namely
 the failure to satisfy the exhaustion requirements in 8 U.S.C. § 1252(d)(1) and the APA, the Court
 finds it unnecessary to rule upon the propriety of Plaintiff’s claim under the REAL ID Act.